

Muslims as Mirrors for One Another

In order to stress the importance of brotherhood and unity, the Prophet ﷺ used different examples to describe how Muslims should be like with one another in terms of conduct and behaviour. In one famous report, he said:

‘The Muslims are like one body. If the eye is hurt, then the whole body suffers. And if the head hurts, then whole body suffers.’¹

In other words, the pain and suffering of one Muslim affects each and every person. Another example from our Beloved Messenger ﷺ was when he said:

‘The believer for the believer is like a building. Some part strengthens the other.’²

Each brick in a building supports the other and collectively, they form a perfect building. Likewise all Muslims are there to support one another.

Perhaps the most powerful example our Messenger ﷺ used was when he said:

‘Indeed one of you is a mirror for his brother.’³

Note the intricate use of words by our Messenger ﷺ. He said Muslims are like one body (simile). He then said Muslims are ‘like a building’ (simile). But when it came to the mirror example, he said you are a mirror for your brother (metaphor). So clearly, of the three examples

1 *Sahih Muslim*, Kitab al-Birr wa al-Sila wa al-Adab.

2 *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Salah.

3 *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Kitab Fada'il al-Qur'an.

offered, the Prophet ﷺ wanted us – first and foremost – to be like mirrors for each other.

Why did our Prophet ﷺ describe a Muslim as a mirror for each another? Allāh and His Messenger know best, but here are some plausible suggestions:

1. In the mirror, you pose, see your beauty and admire your perfection. You should do exactly the same when you like at your fellow Muslim. Find beauty in fellow Muslims, not their flaws.
2. When you look at the mirror, you are quick to remove defects, droopy eyes and wrinkles. This is no laughing matter for us. Therefore, when we see defects in our fellow Muslims, we don't laugh and ridicule, it but help to remove it.
3. You do not know what your face looks like until you look in the mirror. So use the Muslims around you to identify your shortcomings. Our elders are sometimes in a better position to judge what we are doing right and what we are doing wrong.
4. What you are is what you see in the mirror. A bearded man does not see an un-bearded man in the mirror. A black-haired man does not see a ginger-haired man in the mirror. So what you see in your brother is really a reflection of what you are like. It says more about you than it does them. If Zaid only sees good in someone then it suggests that he himself is good. If Bakr can only talk negative about the people around him, then it says more about him than it does the people around him.

Good and bad exist in all people. The difficult bit is to see through the bad and appreciate the good. This is exactly what true love is. Love is not to see an objection of perfection and then admire it; but to see an object of imperfection and still admire it.

May Allāh give us the ability to act upon the gilt-edged words of the Prophet ﷺ.

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